

## **Study of Child Protective Service (CPS) Workers Who Maintain 90% or Better Compliance with CFSR Standards**

This section investigates the work characteristics specific to Child Protective Service (PSC) workers in ongoing casework positions. Each theme that emerged from the data is discussed, described, and supported with examples of actual data. Following this section discussion of implications of these themes can suggest ways to address the problems that were found. The major categories that emerged were time, caseload, and fear.

### **Time**

#### Flexible Scheduling

Flexible scheduling was a concept that workers indicated made a difference in whether they could complete home visits when they needed to. An example of flexible scheduling was “I need a flexible schedule, coming in late and working later in the evening.” This would indicate that there is a need for availability in the evening although the general standard is for daytime work of 8:00am to 4:30pm. Another example of this need for flexibility is indicated by the quote of “I work in the evenings just to manage to do home visits, which is due to children not getting home from school until 4 or 5 o’clock in the afternoon.” Also reported with this concept was the importance of time frames and this correlates with having a flexible work schedule in order to meet these time frames.

#### Lockdown

Under the concept of lockdown, workers identified reasons why this concept is important and whether it actually works. The first example states “It would help when supervisors say we are on lockdown you know, for the secretary to respect that and for us to be on lockdown but it doesn’t always work effectively because we end up having to take calls.” Another example with the same thought is “Lockdown time and not being interrupted.” The concept appears to be present but not followed through on in a consistent manner. Lockdown appears to be a concept that helps workers meet their goals when it is used in a consistent manner. An example of this is “A phone day or no phone call day that we have usually helps me.” This participant has a full day with no interruptions instead of just a few hours.

### Overtime

Even with the “flexible schedule” there is still overtime. An example of overtime is “Just having to work a lot of overtime just to get it in to be able to get it done. Even though they tell us we can come in later in the mornings or afternoons and stay late. That always doesn’t work either.” Also “It’s impossible to do this job in 37 and ½ hours a week” and “I have to work overtime.” Participants stated that there was not enough time in a day for them to complete all that was expected of them with the example “I work way over my 37 and ½ hours a week.”

### **Caseload**

#### Size

The size of the caseload was a major concept identified during interviews with participants in this study. The number of cases assigned appeared to have an impact on the ability to complete the work in a timely manner. In order to meet the 90% compliance rate the general consensus was “to have less cases”, “A less caseload”, “A lower caseload” , and “There also needs to be lower caseloads.”

The number of actual cases varied. There was an example that states “I think 15 is the requirement right now and we’re carrying anywhere from 20 to 29.” Another participant identified the number in their case load with the statement “Most of us have 25-27 cases.” An example of not meeting the 90% compliance is “When we have between 12-15 cases 90% was no problem” and “About 15 cases is about, you could pretty much do the work.”

### Staff

Staying fully staffed is an important part of being able to meet the 90% compliance standard. This concept came out across the interviews as a very standard answer. An example of this “When we are fully staffed and we have between 12 and 15 cases 90% was no problem.” Also comments included “We definitely need more staff” and “A social service assistant.” Staying fully staffed is essential but also there is a need for more staff, assistants and “probably more support.”

### Qualities

The qualities found during interviews that assisted workers in completing their work ranged from personal to including the population they work with. This included examples such as “I care for children” and “I have so much empathy for children.” This shows that a concern for children is one quality that keeps a worker going. Other qualities that emerged from the interviews included, “You’ve got to learn to put your biases aside” and “I am easy to talk to and not above anyone”. Also words such and phrases such as being disciplined, “work till the job is done” and “work better under pressure”.

### **Fear**

The one consistency that was relevant in all interviews was the theme of fear. This manifested itself in various forms but no one dominated to break it into different concepts. Some examples to start with include working under the fear of losing their job with the example of “I always think about whether I want to keep my job or not”. This area connects with the quotes about evaluations and reprimands. These include “The motivation that it’s gonna be part of my evaluation” or “if we don’t meet the requirements then we either get a reprimand or we get a good talking to from our supervisor or we have to do an action plan to explain to the Service Region Associate Administrator (SRAA) what we are going to do next month in order to meet the requirements”. Also along with this participants recognized that they are overwhelmed by the amount of work and this only adds to their stress and one participant explained “I’m not sure how I’m going to meet my hundred percent goal this month”. With fear, also came comments that participants wanted “upper level management believe in what you do”.